

3/6/09

**H.B.6616 AN ACT ESTABLISHING WOOD SMOKE TO BE A PUBLIC NUISANCE.
To require the Commissioner of Public Health to amend the Public Health Code to
declare that certain wood smoke emissions shall constitute a public nuisance.**

Chairs Senator Jonathan Harris, Representative Betsey Ritter,
and members of the Public Health Committee

MY NAME IS ROSE BERNABUCCI from NORTH HAVEN, CT

I am here today to ask for your help, to plead for your help, and if necessary
to go down on bended knee and beg for your help.

Since late November, my new neighbor's smoke stack has been emitting large volumes of dark wood smoke from the wood burning stove in his house. He burns morning, noon and night and it is especially dense late at night. The strong, bad smell totally envelops my home and yard and is causing me great distress and harm to my health.

I am 80 years old and take heart medicine. When that strong and often acrid smell permeates my rooms, my heart starts to palpitate and I start to shake. Twice I thought I was having a heart attack. My eyes and throat have been so irritated that I had to see my physician and eye doctor for relief. I worry about what the particulates in the smoke are doing to my lungs. I have had to breathe it for almost three months and it is continuing. EPA stresses how dangerous wood smoke is and all the harmful chemicals in it, especially harmful to children and the elderly.

My physician was appalled that with all the ordinances towns have, **there is none for wood smoke which can kill you.**

I invite you to visualize my situation. I am sitting in my living room watching TV when from next door the powerfully strong and often acrid smell of wood smoke engulfs my rooms. What can I do? I put on a face mask (the white kind that Home Depot sells) and turn on the air purifier I purchased. I can't believe this is happening to me, that I have to endure it. Aren't we all entitled to breathe CLEAN AIR? Part of the complete frustration and helplessness I feel is because NO one has been able to help me.

I have spoken with, written to, e-mailed or visited all those whom I thought had the power to help. Their main response is that "they have no jurisdiction or authority and since the wood burner has a Permit there is nothing they can do. They cannot even go to his house and see how or what he is burning.

I have appealed to the EPA, DEP, the Fire, Police and Health Departments, the First and Second Selectmen, my state Representative, my state Senator, the building inspector and the Town Attorney who sent a letter to the wood burner asking for voluntary compliance, all to no avail. I even spoke to the Industrial Hygienist at Yale University when my doctor felt I had exhausted all possible sources. Most have tried to be helpful but the bottom line is they are helpless without a wood smoke nuisance law. (Meanwhile I keep breathing smoke.)

There are so many obstacles. Wood smoke is difficult to photograph. DEP and the Health Department said that only photos by a certified person can be used in any action. DEP said it is hard to get a certified person because there is a shortage of them and getting them to go from Hartford or thereabouts to my home in North Haven at 11:30 pm or midnight (when the wood smoke is strongest) is hard, also hard to photograph at night and determine its opacity. The Health Department wanted to try to get photos of this nighttime problem but have not been able to do so as yet.

I have spoken to a Realtor about moving, but I like my home. I have been in this house for over 35 years and dutifully paid my taxes to the town and the state. There should be some recourse for those of us VICTIMS of WOOD SMOKE so that we don't have to move, or spend considerable money on installing new windows, doors, air purifiers etc. to try to war off wood smoke...and since it also engulfs the outdoor yard, there are no real barriers. This is an unbearable nightmare. I long to breathe fresh, clean air. Please pass this bill
I ask you, **What would you do if you, your family and children had to breathe wood smoke every day?**

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